

While working in Tanzania I also saw Wattled Plovers on the flood plain of the Wembere and on 'soggy' pastures, adjacent to the Great Ruaha River, on dairy farms near Iringa. The general behaviour of the latter birds suggested breeding, but I failed to find any nests on the farm which I visited most frequently.

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PRATINCOLE *GLAREOLA PRATINCOLA* CATCHING FLIES AT GROUND LEVEL

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Between April and August Pratincoles *Glareola pratincola* are breeding visitors to Lake Magadi where part of their food consists of the ephydrid flies which abound around the edges of some of the shallow lagoons at the south end of the lake near the hot springs. Pratincoles catch these flies by looking intently ahead while leaning forwards, often squatting on the tarsi, and, from this position, making sudden little forward or upward leaps during which the bill is usually closed on a passing fly. Despite watching closely on many occasions, I have not certainly seen any flies taken from the surface of mud or soda shale, and I believe it probable that the technique is used solely to catch flies flying about 10 cm above the ground.

When I first saw a group of Pratincoles behaving in this way I was some 50 m away from the birds and I thought I was observing some sort of communal display; it was not until I was able to approach within about 4 m (in my Land-Rover) that I realised what the birds were actually doing.

This feeding technique is unrecorded in books (e.g., Bannerman 1961) that describe the general habits of the European-breeding race of *G. pratincola*.

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A KENYA RECORD OF *CERCOCOCCYX MONTANUS* AT SEA-LEVEL

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Moreau (1966) included the Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx montanus* in the Tanganyika-Nyasa and East Congo montane bird faunas and remarked on the lack of Kenya records. Several calling birds and a collected female with an oviduct egg at 2000 m a.s.l. on the southern slopes of Mt Kenya in March 1962 represent the only Kenya records (Keith 1968). Keith's specimen is referable to the race *patulus* of Tanzania and Malawi, though his discussion of tail-lengths is confused by the evident transposal of the words 'tail' and 'wing' throughout (confirmed by Keith *in litt.*).

wing-length 142 mm, tail-length 189 mm and weight 56.5 g, was collected from a mist-net in lowland dry forest on coral rag at Shimoni on the south Kenya coast (4°39'S., 39°23'E.). With the assistance of the Curator, it has been compared with the three specimens of *C. m. patulus* in the National Museum, Nairobi, with which it agrees perfectly. This south-eastern form occurs at lower altitudes than nominate birds (White 1965), and it may well be migratory at higher latitudes (Benson 1952). One of the Nairobi Museum specimens was captured alive at a lighted window at night at Amani in north-eastern Tanzania on 26 November 1937, only 100 km from Shimoni at 1000 m a.s.l. This apparent migrant laid an egg in captivity, though it may not perhaps have laid it at this locality under normal circumstances. In view of the lack of records of this species when it is not calling, it is noteworthy that C.F. Mann and I netted and ringed one in forest at Amani on 23 August 1973. It may be only a seasonal visitor to the Kenya coast during the austral winter, as are the Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx picta natalensis*, African Pitta *Pitta angolensis*, and Black Cuckoo-Shrike *Campephaga flava* (Britton 1973, Britton & Britton 1974, Britton & Rathbun in prep.).

Of all the Tanganyika-Nyasa montane birds, Moreau (1966) selected the anomalous distributions of this species and the Green-headed Oriole *Oriolus chlorocephalus* for special mention in view of the lack of records from Mt Kili-manjaro. Though unrecorded in Kenya until recently, this oriole is not uncommon in forest patches on the Shimba Hills in coastal Kenya at 400 m a.s.l., where it is probably a resident breeder (Squire 1976, R.A.M. McVicker pers. comm., pers. obs.), and it has been reported from forest at sea-level on the south Kenya coast (Squire 1976). Though typically montane, both species have been recorded in non-montane habitats below 800 m in southern Tanzania, where the cuckoo was evidently breeding between October and January (Stjernstedt 1970).

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THE FOOD OF A MALACHITE KINGFISHER *ALCEDO CRISTATA* HOLDING A TERRITORY ON A FISHLESS RIVER

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It is known that the Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata* is partly insectivorous. However, previous observations have indicated that small fish and amphibians form its main diet. In 1963 I had an opportunity to note the food taken by a Malachite Kingfisher holding a territory for several weeks on a fishless river; the observation shows that survival is possible for a significant period of time when the main diet was not available.